



HAWAI'I STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

Komikina Ho'opono Kulekele o Hawai'i Moku'āina

August 14, 2026

Ms. Amanda Scala
Athletic Director
Molokai High School
2140 Farrington Avenue
Ho'olehua, HI 96729

Re: Request for a Good Cause Exemption to the Nepotism Law (REQ-2026-1078)

Dear Ms. Scala,

Thank you for contacting the Hawai'i State Ethics Commission ("Commission") to request a good cause exemption to the Nepotism law. You are the Athletic Director for Molokai High School (the "school"). You requested a good cause exemption so that your spouse, Eric Scala, may be hired as a substitute certified athletic trainer at your school. Based on the information provided, it is our opinion that good cause exists to grant an exemption.

The Nepotism law prohibits state employees from taking employment and procurement-related actions that affect their relatives or household members.¹ Employment actions include hiring, evaluating, demoting, promoting, terminating, or supervising a relative or household member. Upon application, the Commission may grant an exemption where good cause is shown, such as a demonstrated lack of qualified personnel or applicants.

In your application and subsequent communications, you informed Commission staff that the State of Hawai'i Department of Education requires all public high schools to provide medical coverage at all games and sporting events with the presence of a certified athletic trainer to ensure the safety of student athletes. Mr. Scala currently holds and maintains a national BOC certification as a Certified Athletic Trainer, as well as CPR/AED certifications. He originally worked at the school from 2015-2022 as a full-time athletic health care trainer before leaving to join the Maui Fire Department. For the past several years prior to your being hired by the school as Athletic Director, Mr. Scala has worked as an athletic health care trainer on a contract basis or as a casual hire/employee for the school.

¹ Hawai'i Revised Statutes ("HRS") § 84-13.2.

For the past several years, the school has made concerted efforts to recruit and hire for the position, but has not been able to find qualified applicants for the athletic trainer position. The position is currently posted on the NEOED job recruitment platform where DOE posts all job openings, and the school has advertised for the position on multiple occasions via social media and other athletic training websites. Despite such efforts, the school has not been able to recruit qualified applicants, mainly due to the part-time nature of the position, the school's geographic location, and the various certifications required for the job.

As Athletic Director, you would be involved in the direct supervision of your spouse at games and other athletic events. Principal Soares, however, will be responsible for handling any employment-related actions that may directly affect Mr. Scala should the need for additional supervision or oversight arise, such as an employment dispute, complaint, investigation, or disciplinary action. In such event, you will be recused from taking official action. Therefore, based on your representations and the circumstances presented here, the Ethics Commission agrees to grant you an exemption for good cause.

Finally, you should be aware of an additional section of the Ethics Code. The Fair Treatment law prohibits state employees from using their state positions to grant themselves or anyone else any unwarranted benefit or advantage. HRS § 84-13(a). State employees who work alongside relatives must be cautious not to give their relatives special treatment.

Thank you for your request for an exemption. This letter is based on the information you have provided. If the information is inaccurate or incomplete, please inform us as soon as possible, as this may affect our decision. Further, if you disagree with any portion of this letter, you may, pursuant to the Order Regarding Applications for Good Cause Exceptions to the Nepotism Law issued on May 17, 2023, appeal to the full Ethics Commission for reconsideration.²

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please call me at (808) 587-0460.

Sincerely,

s/ Bonita Chang

Bonita Chang,
Compliance Director

² Available at <https://ethics.hawaii.gov/wp-content/uploads/Order-NepotismExceptionProcess.pdf>